

# CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

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## CALIFORNIA County Free Libraries

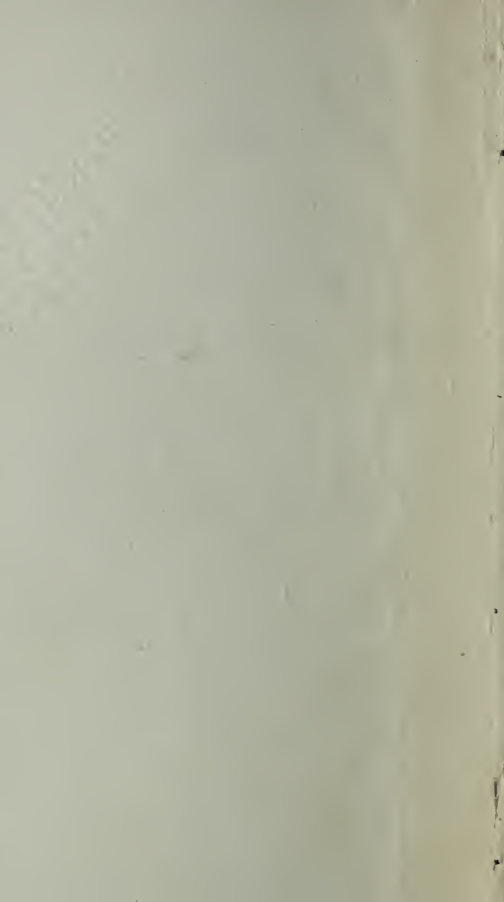
TWO QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED

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## Two Questions Often Asked.

I. What is the county free library?

II. How can we get the county free library in our county?

These two questions are asked very frequently. The most satisfactory way to answer them is to send one of the organizers to call upon the enquirer to explain everything thoroughly, answering not only these two questions, but any others that those interested may want to ask. This, unfortunately, is not always possible; so this attempt is being made to answer the questions briefly on paper.

I. What is the county free library?

A county free library is a library which is established by resolution of the supervisors, which is supported by the county, and which gives free service to every resident of the county. (A town with a library is not included, either for service or taxation, unless the city council notifies the supervisors that it wishes to be.) The county unit has been decided upon as the logical one in California for the following reasons:

1. California is the second largest state in the Union, and is much too large to be served adequately or economically through any state system of traveling libraries.

2. Municipal libraries can not serve the large percentage of population living in colonies and in remote parts of the county.

LIBRARY

3. Many municipalities have no library, and are glad to combine into a larger unit which by coöperation means much more economical, much better and much more effective library service.

4. Municipal libraries are glad to have near them and in close touch with them a large library which supplements their own collections and which in no way interferes with the local administration. While this aid is most acceptable to the small libraries, it is none the less welcome to the large ones. The larger the town, the more various the demands upon its library; hence even a keener need is felt by the librarian for a supplementing supply of books, such as the county free library and the State Library are able to offer.

5. Every school district in the county may, by coöperation with the county free library, receive a library service otherwise impossible.

6. The county is a large enough unit to give more adequate support to the library with a small tax levy.

7. The county is a large enough unit to be able to employ a librarian who is professionally trained and experienced, and thus the library service throughout the county is brought to the highest possible plane of efficiency.

S. The county free library serves all the people of the county.

The county free library is perfectly simple in its method of operation, following closely that of a large city with its branches in different sections of the town. The only difference is that a city library has the municipality for its boundary, while the county free library has the county for its boundary. In a county free library the headquarters are established at the county seat, and in charge of a county librarian who has had training and experience in library work, and who holds a certificate from the Board of Library Examiners. The librarian visits all parts of the county, gets acquainted with the people, ascertains the book needs of the general public, the schools, the clubs, etc., and makes up collections of books to be placed at each branch with special reference to the needs and desires of that particular locality, the largest collection being placed where the demand is greatest. These collections are changed in part or entire, as the community no longer uses them. In addition, if a book is desired which is not in the local collection, it is sent from the central county free library; or if not found there, it is supplied from the State Library, all shipments being free to the borrower. In this way, as soon as a person is in a

county free library system, he is practically sure of complete library service—of receiving any book which he needs and of receiving it free of any charges, either for transportation or service.

In very small communities the books are usually placed in a store, post office, or anywhere convenient to the public. In communities large enough to need it, reading rooms are maintained, in charge of a custodian who keeps the room open whatever hours it will be used. The reading rooms are being welcomed as a strong influence for good in the small communities. Supplied with newspapers, magazines and books they offer a most acceptable social center.

In towns with libraries, any coöperation with the county free library is for service only, and in no way interferes with the administration of the local library. If the town joins, it is then included in the taxable area, and the town library is supplemented in every way possible. The people of the town thereby receive a service naturally much more extended than any town library would see its way clear to give, since its resources and book possibilities are more limited than those of the county. A branch in a library is also able to give free service to the surrounding country.

The county free library is a particular

benefit to the schools. They receive a service impossible to get from their own shelves, for no school can afford to own all the books for reference and research work that the teachers may desire for the pupils. With free access to the county free library and through it to the State Library, books and other library material are thus made available.

Already twenty-three counties are carrying on county free library work, and many more are making preparations. With a central office and store house established at the county seat, and with a branch there and branches out in various parts of the county the people even in the remotest corner are receiving a library service otherwise impossible, except under such a coöperative plan. The counties now carrying on the plan are Alameda, Butte, Contra Costa, Fresno, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Monterey, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Yolo. If information is wished as to the work being carried on by these counties, a letter addressed to the county librarian at the county seat will receive attention.

The money appropriated for county free library purposes is spent for the following :

1. Books. Each county is expected to own the books that are continually used in the county. (The various ways in which the State Library helps the county free libraries are explained in the next paragraph.)

2. Transportation.

3. Custodians' fees and other branch expenses.

4. Supplies.

5. Maintenance at headquarters.

The California State Library loans free of transportation to the county free libraries such books as are too expensive to justify the county's purchasing them, books which are only occasionally called for, books out of print, or rare, or several books on one subject where more are wanted by a school, a club, etc., than the county needs to own. Thousands of books on various professions such as law, medicine, electricity, farming, etc., historical works, including material about California, documents, books in foreign languages, books for the blind, art books and stereoscopic views are some of the material available from the State Library.

The traveling libraries have been withdrawn from circulation, but the books are available to the public in another way. They are loaned for a limited time in groups up to 1,000 volumes to any county starting a county free library, and need-



ing this temporary assistance to get the branches started.

II. How can we get the county free library in our county?

The county free library law is an enabling act, making it possible for any board of supervisors on their own initiative to establish a county free library, the following steps being required by law :

1. Adopt resolution of intention.

2. Publish notice of intention. (This must be published three times so as to cover fully two weeks.)

3. Adopt resolution of establishment.

Blank forms for the above three steps can be obtained from the State Library.

4. Appoint a county librarian who has been certificated by the Board of Library Examiners. (See the law, section 6.)

Experience in the counties that have already established county free libraries shows that the supervisors in any county need only to know that their people want the county free library. So every individual interested, as well as clubs, granges and other organizations should present their requests and make their wants known to their supervisors.

Assistance can be had from the State Library and from the Board of Library Examiners :

1. From the State Library.

- a. Copies of the law.

b. Information as to any point which is not clear in the law.

c. Blank forms for petitions for those who prefer to communicate with their supervisors in that way.

d. Blank forms for the three necessary steps of the supervisors: The resolution of intention; the notice of intention; and the resolution of establishment.

e. Information as to the cost of the work in counties where it has been in operation.

This last information can be had from the State Library, because the reports of the librarians of the county free libraries already established are on file there.

2. From the Board of Library Examiners.

A list of the librarians that have been certificated by the Board and are qualified to hold the office of county librarian, will be furnished to any board of supervisors on request to the Chairman of the Board of Library Examiners. (See the law, section 6.)

For any further information on county free libraries communicate with the

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY.  
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Sacramento, California.



